



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

**FULL COMMISSION MEETING**

**THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2009**

**3:30 – 6:00 PM**

**GREATER WASHINGTON URBAN LEAGUE BOARDROOM**

MINUTES

Commissioners

Anne Ashmore-Hudson, Chair  
Marvin Bowser  
Christopher Cowan  
Lou Hill Davidson  
Rebecca Fishman  
Rogelio Maxwell  
Tendani Mpulubusi  
Marsha Ralls  
Bernard Richardson  
Michael R. Sonnenreich  
Judith Terra

Staff

Gloria Nauden, Executive Director  
Shai Littlejohn, Deputy Director  
Dolores Kendrick, Poet Laureate  
Catherine Cleary, Dir. of Grants & Leg. Affairs  
Moshe Adams, Legislative and Grants Manager  
Ebony Blanks, Arts Program Coordinator

I. Call to Order

Anne Ashmore-Hudson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:40 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes

The Chair asked the Commission to review the minutes from the executive committee meeting on April 23, 2009.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Terra that the Commission approve the minutes as presented.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

III. Poet Laureate's Report

The Poet Laureate related the recent activities conducted through her office. The Poet Laureate "Poet in Progress" awards took place on Friday, May 22 and the Poet Laureate thanked Lisa Richards Toney and Karen Baker for their assistance in producing the event. She

noted that her book of poems, *Women of Plums*, has now been in publication for 20 years, officially making it a piece of classic American literature.

The Poet Laureate also informed the commissioners of her activities at the Lake Braddock school in Maryland and her recent reading in Montpelier, for which and thanked the Chair for her attendance. She also mentioned her presence at an event at Exeter.

#### IV. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director drew the commissioners' attention to the "It's Grant Time!" flyers in their binders and highlighted recent efforts to be more accessible to Spanish speakers. She explained the new e-granting process, including the fact that applicants only need to drop off one hard-copy application instead of ten and how the panels will receive the applications on a flash drive instead of as a large packet of documents to review. The new workshop schedule, including workshops at Artomatic and east of the Anacostia River was also discussed. The Executive Director noted the new applicant resource center at the Commission's offices and the fact that the applications have been converted to a question-answer format. She also highlighted recent marketing efforts, particularly the generosity of Channel 16 and local radio stations in spreading the word about the Commission.

The Executive Director also highlighted two recent events: Poet in Progress and the Larry Neal Writers' Awards and commented favorably on the Commission's support of literary arts events. She further noted that we are in summer events season and noted the upcoming Art Salon session, which was inspired by a request made by Commissioner Fishman's; there are already 200 RSVPs for this event.

The Executive Director reminded the Commission about the Summer Youth Employment Program. She also related her recent experience at the Convention Center and DMPED's plan to provide space to working artists. The Washington Sculptor's Guild has been suggested as a possible tenant. A discussion of Deputy Mayor Neil Albert's assignment to the post of City Administrator followed. Commissioner Cowan pointed out that Dan Tangherlini, the current City Administrator, will now serve as the CFO at the United States Treasury.

The FY 2010 budget is almost complete. The Executive Director noted that the organizations getting passthroughs have until Friday, May 29 to send Council the information they need in order to receive funds. Commissioner Bowser asked when the budget will be officially finalized and the Deputy Director related that it will be printed on June 8 and Congress will approve it within 30 days. Commissioner Bowser asked to have a copy of the budget sent to him as soon as it goes to Congress.

Commissioner Fishman asked if there was a final date for the next art salon; it is scheduled for Wednesday, July 1. She explained that the idea was to create a "happy hour-type" event that was open and equitable. Her goal is to get the Commission's name out there for the public. Part of the idea is to showcase art or performances that the Commission has supported, while bringing the community together and getting them to know more about us. The Executive

Director commented that her goal is to converge a wide range of residents, including IT folks and green collar workers. Commissioner Fishman asked if the commissioners got the Art Salon invite and they responded that they had not. The Chair suggested that a committee be formed to work with staff on organizing subsequent Art Salon events. Commissioners Maxwell and Mpulubusi volunteered to serve, with Commissioner Fishman as Chair.

#### V. Chair's Report

The Chair announced that she and the Executive Director met with a possible funder, but learned that they are more interested in funding more cutting edge art. She added that the Larry Neal Writers' Awards were wonderful and commented very favorably on the readings held at the event.

She reported on the interaction between the head of arts education in Los Angeles County Public Schools and the Commission's most recent arts education coordinator.

Commissioner Ralls announced that the slate of Executive Committee officers will be presented at the July meeting.

The Chair noted the full agenda of grant requests and directed the commissioners' attention to the budget in Tab 5 of the binders. She is very excited to have the opportunity to share these funds with the community. The Chair noted that there are additional requests to be made in June and invited the full Commission to meet, rather than confining it to just the executive committee so that everyone can participate in the distribution these funds. The Chair recommended that the commissioners reach out to organizations that they think might benefit from the funding and invite them to submit a two-page request.

Commissioner Fishman asked if part of the funds could be used for the Art Salon and the Executive Director noted that the marketing budget would be the most appropriate source of funds. Commissioner Sonnenreich asked if the African Art Museum could apply and the Chair responded that the Links will be applying for funds to work with that museum.

Commissioner Davidson asked if the full Commission would meet in June and the Chair explained that that is her preference. Commissioner Bowser asked if the commissioners would gather applications and make one decision or make decisions as they go. The Chair explained that there may need to be a couple of meetings in order to award all of the available funds. The Chair also explained that there is the potential for partially funding the requests that are up for consideration. Commissioner Terra noted that the commissioners should keep the available balance in mind when encouraging groups to apply. It was also clarified that the funds need to be used before September 30 of this year and that grantees cannot spend more than \$500 on a single piece of equipment.

The Chair noted that we have never had this much funding to award before and Commissioner Ralls added that it may be wise to set some guidelines and/or a cap for funding. Commissioner Sonnenreich suggested setting a flat award. If the request comes from an individual, the cap

should be set lower, possibly at \$2,500. The Chair asked everyone to meet some extra times to get this done and the commissioners agreed.

The Executive Director also commented on the need to distribute the \$300,000 of stimulus funds through a competitive process.

Commissioner Mpulubusi asked why there should be a cap of \$2,500 for individuals. He noted that as individual artists, the expenses rack up just with supplies and those funds might not cover the labor or artistic contributions. Commissioner Ralls suggested a cap of \$2,500 to \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 and \$30,000 for organizations. Commissioner Maxwell supported Commissioner Mpulubusi's point. Commissioner Sonnenreich recommended raising the cap for individuals to \$10,000.

It was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Mpulubusi to set a cap of \$10,000 for individuals making community funding requests and \$30,000 for organizations making community funding requests.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

#### VI. Small Projects Program

Ebony Blanks, Arts Program Coordinator, introduced Frank Albinder, panel representative, who reported on the panel meeting. The Small Projects Program panel made the following policy recommendations:

1. Applicants should submit at least two bids for goods or services needed for the project.
2. The artistic statement should not merely reiterate the project description.
3. Need clearer definitions of residency requirements.

The Chair commended the staff for the clear presentation of the information in the binders.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Fishman to approve the funding recommendations as presented.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

The Chair shared a letter from a participant in a program that we funded through the Elders Learning Through the Arts program. Commissioner Maxwell asked if everyone got the catalogue from the Washington Project for the Arts, which most of the commissioners did. The Poet Laureate noted translating her poem into Chinese and sharing it with the Chinese delegation.

## VII. Folk and Traditional Arts Program

Ebony Blanks, Arts Program Coordinator, introduced Karen McClane, panel representative, who reported on the panel meeting. She noted that this was the first time she had served on a panel and that she was very impressed with the way that it was done.

Commissioner Sonnenreich introduced a conversation on how to demonstrate more hospitality and make the panel representatives' time investment worth their while. The Chair suggested having a real runner who will attend to them while they wait to make their presentations. Commissioner Sonnenreich suggested a signed letter thanking them for their service.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Terra to approve the funding recommendations as presented.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

## VIII. Artists in Schools and Arts Teacher Fellowship Program

The Director of Grants and Legislative Affairs introduced Goldie Patrick Deane, panel representative, who reported on the panel meeting. The Director of Grants and Legislative Affairs announced that this marked the third and final panel for these grant programs. Commissioner Mpulubusi remarked that the panel was very astute. The panel made the following policy recommendations:

1. Applicants should submit at least two bids for goods or services needed for the project.

The Executive Director asked Ms. Deane what the Commission could do to improve the number of applicants. Ms. Deane responded that more workshops and training for filling out competitive applications would help guide the teachers as they address DCPS standards.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Fishman and seconded by Commissioner Ralls to approve the funding recommendations as presented.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

## IX. Step Afrika! Funding Request

C. Brian Williams, Executive Director, presented Step Afrika!'s request. He mentioned that he was very pleased to have the opportunity to be before the Commission. He noted that the demand for Step Afrika! has grown throughout DC and around the world. His primary concern is that the size of the organization does not accommodate "life happening," (i.e., if someone gets insured or sick, they are too small to handle the drop in resources). One of the goals is to expand the company for a couple of reasons, including having a group that can go on the road, while one stays in DC and he noted that because their revenue model is based on performance fees, Step Afrika! has to be on stage more than they can be in the rehearsal space.

The Chair asked if Step Afrika! had applied for funds to create new artworks. He responded that the art form is so new that they have a difficult time competing for those types of funds.

Mr. Williams explained the art of stepping directly to Commissioner Sonnenreich. He closed by saying Step Afrika! is committed to using the funds to support District organizations, such as the Atlas Performing Arts Center, from which they rent space.

Commissioner Davidson commended the organization for providing demonstrations in schools and Commissioner Ralls noted their incredible performance at the Welcome to Washington event. The Chair asked about the instruction offered to young people Mr. Williams noted the tremendous success of their current summer camp in Ward 5.

Commissioner Mpulubusi related an anecdote about asking if he could join.

The Chair noted that the organization seemed to have multiple projects going on and suggested offering funds for more than one set of activities.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Mpulubusi and seconded by Commissioner Maxwell to approve the funding request at \$30,000.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

X. Duke Ellington Jazz Festival Funding Request

Sunny Sumter, Managing Director, introduced herself and presented the education component of the organization's work. She noted that they actually did the same concert series back in October and were asked by the City to put together a permanent series in June as well.

She commented that the Festival lost its four major corporate sponsors this year but they are plowing ahead. She noted the strong ticket revenue they have raised this year.

She related her own experiences with arts education as a child and her commitment to ensuring that kids in DC get the same opportunities *she* got as a child in town.

Commissioner Maxwell asked if the organization is involved in the Marsalis Family event. Ms. Sumter invited everyone to attend the event on June 15 and the June 10 event at the French Embassy.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Terra and seconded by Commissioner Maxwell to approve the funding request at \$30,000.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

XI. Jones-Haywood Dance School Funding Request

Sandra Fortune-Green, Artistic Director, presented the curriculum for the proposed summer programming. She noted that this will be the fourth summer of the program and that she is proud to be expanding. She noted, especially, the new partnership with a speech pathologist to help the students to understand the executive functions of their bodies.

She then presented an essay written by a student in the most recent summer program entitled "Sur le Table."

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Terra and seconded by Commissioner Cowan to approve the funding recommendations as presented.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

XII. The Washington Ballet Funding Request

Septime Weber, Artistic Director, introduced Katrina Toews, the Director of Programs at THEARC. Mr. Weber noted that the Ballet's community engagement programs targeted at underserved children has evolved into a serious ballet academy. Between the two locations, the method is to develop a city-wide dance program.

He noted that the program at THEARC runs from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM and includes breakfast and lunch provided by the United Way of the Capital Region as part of a healthy bodies initiative. He also described the exciting partnerships with the other tenants at THEARC and the basic template of the program at the Northwest campus. New this year is the convergence of the two groups through a performance at the end of the summer. He noted the preparations made to merge the two groups successfully and productively (based on their experience with getting the two disparate groups together for a performance of *The Nutcracker*). Ms. Toews reiterated the excitement of merging the groups.

Commissioner Fishman asked if members of the school ever enter the company; many have. Mr. Weber also highlighted the first student from THEARC to move over to the Northwest campus. He also noted the recent creation of a junior company to help bridge the gap between students and professional company members.

Mr. Weber reminded the commissioners that their Dance DC program is also expanding.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Fishman and seconded by Commissioner Terra to approve the funding recommendations as presented. [The Chair and Commissioner Davidson abstained from the vote.]

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

XIII. Sasha Bruce Youthwork

Erica de Bardeleben, Program Coordinator, introduced the organization and the mission of the program. She mentioned a campaign that the students in the program led to change the student discipline policy in DC Public Schools, which was ultimately drafted by the Chancellor's office and is currently up for consideration before the Council. Commissioner Fishman asked for more information on the policy, which Ms. de Bardeleben provided: it actually began from a plan to introduce therapy as an alternative to suspension in schools.

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Fishman and seconded by Commissioner Maxwell to approve the funding request as presented.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

XVI. Communications Committee Report

Commissioner Mpulubusi related the activities of the Committee on promoting the Commission east of the Anacostia River, reminding the commissioners of their participation in the EOR arts tour. He noted that some of the participating artists were also showcased in an art show for DC Vote and they are hoping to auction some of the work. He noted that he'll be doing an article every month for the *East of the River* paper to highlight arts activities in those neighborhoods.

It was moved by Commissioner Davidson and seconded by Commissioner Bowser to adjourned.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 PM.